



New Education, Indophilia and Women's Activism: Indo-German Entanglements, 1920s to 1940s

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1 Introduction

In this paper, I examine Indo-German encounters in the field of international New Education during the 1920s until 1940s. My focus lies on how the Germans constructed India and Indians as different, i.e. as "the Other", and on the resulting power relations that materialised in those Indo-German encounters. The source material consists of published and unpublished writings by six German and Austrian female New Educationists who documented their time in India. Besides descriptions of how they experienced India, all of them addressed education and issues that were also discussed in the contemporary women's movements.

In my earlier research, I have concentrated on the question of how Orientalism materialised within Indo-German encounters in the field of international New Education and concluded that no exchange of educational ideas *on equal terms* can be detected from the sources (Horn 2018). Focusing on Saidian Orientalism, the analysis of how power asymmetries between Europe and India were reproduced necessarily had to be the dominant perspective. Speaking of entanglements, however, enables to consider exchange without the prerequisite of equality—while not neglecting asymmetries: Within a common frame of reference—like the transnational sphere of international New Education at the beginning of the twentieth century¹—the reciprocity of transfer processes that



brought about Orientalism comes into view (Pernau 2011: 56-60). In any case, transfer did take place (Allender 2016; Tschurenev 2017; Horn 2017 etc.). In order to find out more about the relevance of powerful constructions of difference in Indo-German encounters and the conditions of transfer qualifying such encounters, I look at how differences were produced. What were their premises and limits in the sphere of international New Education? Were global power asymmetries reinforced, and if so, how? And which conclusion can be drawn from this difference production as regards education itself?

Since most of the introduced pedagogues were involved in women's activism, I also relate their writings to what Dietze (2017) labels as 'Feminist Orientalism'. Based on the idea of the dichotomy between the Orient and Occident and the collective imagination of an excessively patriarchal Orient as a place of violent misogyny, proponents of 'Feminist Orientalism'—according to Dietze—brand their own society as civilised and, therein, convince otherwise reluctant males in their society to approve of the feminist cause (Dietze 2017: 76, 89f.). An illustration of staging 'Feminist Orientalism' was when Helene Lange, German feminist and pioneer of New Educationist ideas, blamed Indian men for mistreating their wives in order to demand that German men respect women's rights in their own society (Lange 1964: 12). Such claims, however, simultaneously result in labelling "Oriental" women primarily as victims without agency or voice, with western feminists making it their obligation to save them. Does 'Feminist Orientalism' apply to Germanophone New Educationists? Was there any connection between the pedagogues' interest in women's activism and their Indophile perspectives?

In the following sections, I first roughly sketch the interrelation of women's movements and New Education around 1900 in Germany and briefly compare it to the corresponding developments in India. In the next section, I explain the historical background of Indophilia—i.e. the love and fascination for India or rather exotic clichés of it—in the German bourgeois *Reformpädagogik* movement, an educationally broad and ideologically diverse form of New Education. This is important for understanding the shaping of German and Austrian pedagogues' perspectives on and perceptions of India. Against this background, the article will delve into the source material and introduce six female New Educationists from Germany and Austria who travelled to India during the 1920s until 1940s.

2 Women's movement and New Education in Germany and India at the beginning of the twentieth century

Women's movements of the late nineteenth century paved the way for noticeable female engagement in New Educationist spheres. Ellen Key and Maria Montessori are prominent examples of female pedagogues involved in feminist debates (Baader 2014: 167ff.; Kramer 1977). New Education and the bourgeois women's



movements in continental Europe were both influenced by romanticist ideas of childhood and femininity. They shared the desire for building a more humane world— in contrast to a corrupted modernity—and a common terrain with regards to education and social reform (Kersting 2013: 173). A major similarity was their image of the child. Baader argues that the bourgeois women's movement and New Education around 1900 jointly established the idea of the 'vulnerable child' (Baader 2014: 160). She points out 'the correlation of child protection and the organisation of child welfare and care'² in this context. Considering the mindless drill at schools and the often violent and unhygienic circumstances in which (proletarian) children commonly grew up, bourgeois feminists and later New Educationists—mostly influenced by eugenics—advocated for a more caring education that should enable children to unfold naturally. Beyond that, Baader has shown that new forms of religiosity—though not always Christian—connected both spheres (Baader 2004, 2005).

In Germany, the bourgeois women's movement—to be distinguished from the proletarian women's movement—and *Reformpädagogik* are closely interwoven through the idea of 'spiritual motherhood' (Schrader-Breyman 1930) and Friedrich Fröbel's concept of early childhood care and education, with the kindergarten as an educational institution for children from three to six years of age. Fröbel had emphasised the importance of familial, i.e. motherly care also for an institutionalised pedagogy in the kindergarten and thus laid the foundation for a female professional sphere. Henriette Schrader-Breyman, his niece, then coined the term of 'spiritual motherhood' by referring to all women's (mothers' and non-mothers') 'innate faculties' of providing loving care for young children, i.e. their 'natural' quality of motherliness (ibid.). The ambivalence of this development is obvious: whereas women's emancipation from social restrictions set in, dichotomous gender stereotypes increased and were naturalised with this development. The idea, however, became most influential among bourgeois first-wave feminists struggling for gender equality by highlighting female-only characteristics and thus claiming their own professional sphere. When female pedagogues founded the *Allgemeiner Deutscher Lehrerinnenverein* (General Association of German Female Teachers) in 1890, it soon became the backbone of the women's movement in Germany (Jacobi 1990; Allen 2000).

Around 1900, New Educationists drew upon, among others, Fröbel's pedagogic concept of early childhood care (Kersting 2013: 185f.). They established schools that restrained from one-sided "bookish" learning and stressed 'lebensnahe' (linking to real life) forms of teaching including play or practical exercises. Referring to a positive anthropology that has its roots in German romanticism (Baader 1996), New Educationists emphasised that teaching needed rather motherly love than order. At least rhetorically, they regarded children as pure, innocent, creative and naturally good beings. Thus, they needed to be protected



from violent forms of schooling, poor parenting, and deforming influences of modern society (Baader 2014: 160).

In India, New Educational projects emerged around 1900 and were embedded in or linked to the national education movement (Horn 2018: 54-62). Canonical protagonists of an Indian New Education, prominently Mohandas K. Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore, were at the same time popular proponents of an independent India. Most of these pedagogical projects aimed at re-establishing an authentic Indian education. Therefore, founders of Indian New Schools often invoked a glorious Indian past as a reference for their pedagogy (Mann 2015). However, after more than one hundred years of British rule, Indian education had absorbed Western concepts and was, in the end, a result of the rebounding effects of Western Orientalist discourse, as Fischer-Tiné (2003) demonstrates with the example of the Gurukul Kangri, established by the Arya Samaj. This and similar associations such as Brahma Samaj, a religious and social reform movement established during the nineteenth century among the educated classes in Bengal, aspired to return to the essentials of traditional Indian religion in order to restore a national Indian past, thus creating a synthesis of western and eastern concepts (Kulke & Rothermund 1998: 347). Among others, Tagore's family belonged to the Brahma Samaj. By pursuing social reforms, for example by founding schools or campaigning for women's—albeit limited—education, the Brahma Samaj and other associations became very influential.

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Another influential association was the Theosophical Society (TS), located in Adyar from 1882 onwards. Its members supported the Indians' cause for independence by searching for a Hindu past, established schools according to New Educationist principles and introduced new ideas of womanhood³, for example, by including 'women on all levels of the organization' (Kraft 2013: 357). The TS represented a space where women were enabled to actively engage for progressive agendas. An early player for women's rights in India was the Women's Indian Association, founded in 1917 by leading Anglo-Indian Theosophists. The *WIA*, described as a 'training ground for the women in social and political movements', fought 'against illiteracy, child marriage [...] and other social ills' (Sudarkodi 1997: 742f.).⁴

By implication, the TS was originally interested in educational reforms as a tool to initiate social change (Blavatsky 1889: 270f.). Annie Besant and other prominent Theosophists appreciated the pedagogical concept of Maria Montessori, herself engaged in women's activism (Kramer 1977: 321). Her pedagogical method was greatly popularised by Theosophists (Boyd & Rawson 1965: 65). Theosophy and Montessori's educational assumptions matched quite well, mainly with regards to basic (quasi-)religious assumptions (Kramer 1977: 322). Even beyond theosophical circles, this method was welcomed by Indian educators,



mostly in the area of early childhood care and education, for example by Saraladevi Sarabhai, the wife of a Gujarati industrialist, who included Montessori's method in her school in Ahmedabad already prior to 1920 (Eckert 2007: 211; Sarabhai 2005: 217). Ever since the 1920s, numerous schools operating with the Montessori apparatus were opened in India, many of them associated with Theosophists. The TS, possessing an extensive network, had a lasting effect on many Indian protagonists acting at the junctions of feminism, education and anti-colonial struggles. One of the founding members of the All-India Women's Conference and a prominent fighter for Indian independence, Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya, was somewhat influenced by Annie Besant in her younger years (DuBois 2017: 1). In 1929, she attended the international conference of the New Education Fellowship, an association established by Theosophists, as an Indian representative (Oesterheld 2015: 45).

From its very beginning, the institutionalised Indian women's movement supported the nationalist cause and demanded educational reform. When in 1910, Saraladevi Chaudhurani, related to the Tagore family and, hence, the Brahmo Samaj, and a proponent of independence, founded an early nationalist women's organisation, the *Bharat Stree Mahamandal*, it primarily campaigned for female education. Later, many of the New Educationists were supporters—if not members—of the *All-India Women's Conference* (AIWC)—or vice versa. A prominent example is Rameshwari Nehru, social worker and founding member of the *AIWC*, who participated in conferences of the *New Education Fellowship* (Boyd & Rawson 1965: 89f.). Ever since its foundation in 1927, the *All-India Women's Conference* engaged in educational reform, especially with regards to higher education for women, universal girls' schooling, and "child education". For the 1920s and '30s, Samita Sen speaks of a 'peak of the so-called first feminist movement. [...] It was a phase of remarkable unity, albeit one achieved at the cost of major social and ideological exclusions [...]: the urgency of the nationalist struggle overrode the priorities of the feminist agenda [...].' (Sen 2000: 23) She also critically mentions the elitist background of several feminists.

3 India as a teacher: Indophilia in German New Education and women's activism

The key for understanding the entanglement of images of childhood and femininity with Indophilia, both among German New Educationists and first-wave feminists, lies in Romanticist thought. Its exponents rejected sociocultural developments that fostered bourgeois values such as rationality, usefulness, sense of reality and technical progress but yearned for the poetic, the fantastic, for naturalness, innocence and religiousness. Several Romanticists projected all these qualities onto children thus creating idealised notions of childhood (Baader



1996). A comparable process can be described for notions of femininity that evolved around 1800 (Honegger 1992).

Simultaneously, German Romanticists were greatly interested in Indian cultural and religious traditions. Maillard describes this climax point of romanticist fascination for India in Germany around 1800 as 'Indomania'. A rather complex phenomenon in cultural history, Indomania depended on the contemporary philosophy of history, especially on it defining the relative importance of cultures within a teleological historical process. Against the backdrop of the Romanticists' notion of living in a cultural crisis, 'India' served their desire to locate one's own origins in an imagined long-gone 'Golden Age' (Maillard 2008: 73f.). Accordingly, German Romanticists regarded India as the 'childhood of humanity', thus creating parallel notions of childhood, femininity, and India—all of which were characterised as pure, original, natural, and genuinely pious. In representing "the Other", they became a means to criticise Western civilisation.

One might say, these romanticist images were produced in a process of an *inverted Othering*. The concept of "Othering", according to Gayatri C. Spivak (1985), describes the process in which something or someone is negatively coined as different in order to make it subaltern and simultaneously to re-affirm one's own self. As a result, "the Other" is excluded from discourses of power. Even though "India" was overtly enhanced with romantic Indomania, the implicit criticism of the concept is still appropriate as Indomania was, after all, neither able and nor supposed to challenge Europe's global cultural hegemony, which emerged as part of colonial expansion (Horn 2018).

The following examples from romantic literary and essay writing illustrate how images of femininity, childhood, and India were combined *and* interlinked with educational reflections. Friedrich Majer, a student of Herder's, located the beginning of education with the emergence of 'Brahmanism' several thousand years ago (Majer 1818: 240). In his review of Georg Forster's translation of Kalidas' drama *Shakuntala*, Majer hailed the play as it would teach its German *female* reader by helping her to inwardly return to her childhood years (Majer 1800). In 1803, Karoline von Günderode told the story of a young merchant who, unloved by his father, leaves Europe for India in order to not only find a surrogate father in a Brahmin he encounters, but also to discover his true own self with his help (Günderode 2006). August von Kotzebue's play *Die Indianer in England* (1840) features—in line with romanticism, though not romanticist itself—the figure of an Indian girl that serves as an example of innocent goodness. As such she initiates the transformation of several westerners in the plot, a development for their betterment that can be interpreted as an educational process. The special meaning of her moral qualities as an Indian female are highlighted in a profound analysis by Zhang (2013: 212).



Fröbel, founding father of the kindergarten and strongly influenced by romanticism (Jacobi 1990: 209), was also keenly interested in "Asian treasures" and attempted learning several 'Oriental languages' during his student days in Göttingen around 1811 (Kiuchi 2003: 81). Whether his friendship with Karl Christian Friedrich Krause, who had developed a pantheistic ideology mainly based on Sanskrit philosophy, really made an impact on Fröbel's pedagogy remains unclear (ibid.: 83). However, Fröbel's idea of the kindergarten was successfully imported to India by the late nineteenth century (Allen 2018; Tschurennev 2018).

To summarise, Romanticists established topoi that combine ideas of educational and social reform with an orientalist imagination of the South Asian subcontinent and its people: India was regarded as the 'childhood of humanity', Indians as innocent and naturally good like children were. As such, they were adapted for teaching westerners and transforming western civilisation—both corrupted by modernity—and in helping them to reclaim the purity of childhood. For Romanticists, to be oriented towards India meant almost re-attaining the 'Golden Age' (Horn 2018).

At the beginning of the twentieth century, both protagonists of bourgeois feminism as well as the *Reformpädagogik* in Germanophone countries drew on these romanticist imaginations. Numerous German New Educationists turned their attention to India, thus stabilising orientalist discourses (Horn 2018: 253). Their Indophilia was mainly grounded in what historian Thomas Nipperdey termed 'wandering religiosity' (Nipperdey 1993: 527; in German: 'vagierende Religiosität'). Like the Romanticists, early twentieth century education reformers diagnosed a cultural crisis and, among others, hoped for salvation from foreign religious ideas. Rabindranath Tagore, raised among Brahmo Samajists, was extremely famous in Germany in the 1920s. He appeared as the prototypical Indian to many of them, representing religious wisdom, humaneness, and authentic morality. Being an idol for German New Education, he was characterised as child-like, motherly, prophetic, and even divine (Natorp 1921). As such, Tagore was the blueprint of the ideal New Educationist: He did not need to educate children but had an effect on them by the sheer presence of his 'naturally charismatic personality' (Horn 2018: 200-9).

From among German New Educationists, several voices inspired by feminist thought addressed these Indophile points of view and ascribed India, known as 'the motherland of humanity' (Pfeill 1919: 123), with female, that is, mostly motherly virtues. After meeting Tagore in Darmstadt during the summer of 1921, Paul Natorp, an outspoken supporter of the German "Reformpädagogik" remarked—in a tone of envy—that women were still honoured in India. He added that, in India, the woman 'is not being alienated from her natural purpose of



motherhood and home-life' (Natorp 1921: 16). This opinion is not too far from Ellen Key who opted for training mothers in order to 'emancipate children from the kindergarten system', that is, to stay at home (Key 1909: 235). Similarly, the Swiss women's rights activist Emma Pieczynska-Reichenbach affirmatively referred to Tagore's ideas about femininity and motherhood in 'Tagore als Erzieher' ([1923]). The Jewish publicist Paul Cohen-Portheim compared the relation between (a mainly Indian) Asia and Europe as that between a mother and her son. He thus transferred this dichotomy into the bipolar patterns of being female and male—a phenomenon most common to Western Orientalist discourse (Said 1979: 206f.). According to the title of his book, *Asien als Erzieher*, Europe needed to be educated, even taught by Asia (Cohen-Portheim 1920). However, the general superiority of masculinity was not challenged.

Indophilia in German New Education of the 1920s declared "India" to be both the child and the teacher. Based on romanticist notions, India represented a long-bygone ideal of humanity that was threatened by western modernity. In the same way that *Reformpädagogik*—at least rhetorically—inverted the roles of teacher and child, its protagonists glorified India: the West needed to learn from the East to become great again. Thus, learning from India would only be a passage. In the future, it would be the West that would prevail. After all, this Indophilia had nothing to do with the "real India". Therefore, in the following sections, I introduce six female New Educationists from Germany and Austria who experienced the gap between the ideal and "real" India in different ways between the 1920s and 40s. I explore their Indophilia and its role in Indo-German encounters, especially with regards to the construction and projection of difference.

4 Indophilia at *Odenwaldschule*: Alwine von Keller, Ingeborg Badenhausen, and Ellen Sharma-Teichmüller

Alwine von Keller, Ingeborg Badenhausen, and Ellen Sharma-Teichmüller belonged to the staff a famous *Landerziehungsheim*—a New Educationist boarding school—, *Odenwaldschule*, near Heidelberg. Its founders, the couple Edith Cassirer and Paul Geheeb, were closely connected to the German women's movement. Therefore, the coeducational profile of *Odenwaldschule* was a matter close to its founders' hearts. Beyond that, the school was famous for its practice of religious freedom, for its networking with intellectuals and artists and for its affinity to ideas of the *Lebensreform* (life reform), a sociocultural movement that pursued a more natural life-style. In the course of time, Geheeb had acquired the reputation of being a 'friend of India', mainly because of his meeting with Rabindranath Tagore in 1930.



Tagore, however, was not the only one: Odenwaldschule was visited by more than 30 Indians between 1922 and 1934, among them the Indian feminists Avabai Mehta, later secretary at the AIWC's central office (All-India Women's Conference 1945/46) and Keron Bose who was a delegate at the 1933 congress of the *International Council of Women* in Stockholm (Bose 1933). More generally, Indian religion, literature and history played not too small a role in everyday school life. The credit of bringing "India" to Odenwaldschule, however, goes to Alvine von Keller (Horn 2018). Her mentee-colleague Ingeborg Badenhausen and she spent several months in India, Keller from autumn 1929 till spring 1930, Badenhausen from October 1931 till July 1932. Keller's daughter, Ellen Teichmüller-Sharma migrated to India in 1936. They encountered numerous Indian New Educationists, addressed issues like girls' education, and were influenced by Indophile ideas.

Keller (1878-1965), daughter of protestant bourgeois parents, taught English and German at *Odenwaldschule* from 1915 onwards. Earlier, Keller had been living in centres of the *Lebensreform* movement and was strongly influenced by the ideas and cultural criticisms of the German women's movement. Already prior to her coming to *Odenwaldschule*, she was familiar with writings of both August Bebel as well as Ramakrishna (Keller [ca. 1950]: 50, 142)⁵. From 1911 onwards, she had been practising yoga and dreamt of retreating to the Himalaya for 'constant meditation' (ibid.). To travel to India was one of her strongest desires. (Prabuddhaprana 1994: 224) At *Odenwaldschule*, Keller repeatedly read passages from Indian scriptures like the *Bhagavad Gita* to her students.

In spring 1929, Keller encountered Josephine MacLeod (1858-1949). She was a friend of Vivekananda's, founder of the Ramakrishna Mission, who had become famous for his speech at the Parliament of World Religions in Chicago, 1893. MacLeod visited *Odenwaldschule* and was delighted to be there, stating 'I wish I could have that for the Indian children at Nivedita's⁶ school.' (Prabuddhaprana 1994: 223) She invited Keller to accompany her to India where they set out by autumn the same year. On their journey, they visited a number of New Educational institutions– the theosophical *Guindy School* in Madras founded by Annie Besant in 1918 and then headed by G. V. Subha Rao; *Gujarat Vidyapith*, a college in Ahmedabad founded by Gandhi; and two schools financed by a charitable trust of the Indian industrialist Ambalal Sarabhai.

One of these was a small private school headed by his wife Saraladevi Sarabhai, who was familiar with Montessori's pedagogy and the second a Nursery School founded by Anasuya Sarabhai (1885-1972), both in Ahmedabad (Keller 1932). The latter had been opened by Saraladevi's aunt around 1914 as a school for the children of the workers of her family's mills (Taneja 2002: 194, 211). She was also the founder of the Ahmedabad *Textile Labour Association* and is



considered a pioneer of the women's labour movement in India. Furthermore, Keller attended the All-India Women's Conference in Bombay in 1930 where she also met Sarojini Naidu, president of the AIWC at the time, besides Gandhi and Tagore. MacLeod and Keller, however, spent most of their time on the premises of the Ramakrishna Mission.

Initially, Keller was reluctant and did not want to go to India as a teacher: 'I felt I was only a child, a pupil, a student. How could I, who wanted to sit at the feet of the great mother India, act as if I were one who was a giver?' (Prabuddhaprana 1994: 224) To her, education was a quasi-religious act and found its end in self-realisation. Not unlike other New Educationists, she thought of herself both as a teacher and a learner (Keller 1930c: 119). At the same time, education, in Keller's eyes equal to realising one's own self, was something that one was granted. In a poem published in 1912, shortly after she started practicing Yoga, she prays that God shall 'create within me what You have beheld in me.' (Keller 1912: 5) For Keller, religiousness and education were thoroughly interconnected. Her journey to India was thus both a religious and an educational issue. She hoped for India, a motherly-godly teacher, to help her progress on her way to understanding and becoming her own self.

To achieve self-realisation, however, Keller thought that India had to be what she wanted it to be—original, pure, and innocent. Reality, however, was more complicated. After attending a women's meeting in a village near Belur Math, Keller wrote:

Fifty to sixty women with their children [...], an enchanting and strange sight. [...] All the time, these women are surrounded by a sphere of melancholy, quietness and patience, full of dignity. I had to speak [...]. The "[Ramakrishna] Society" seems to propagate education of girls and women, at least that was what I was supposed to talk about. What to say?! [...] the small girls look like the old images of goddesses [...]. And yet, school education is, as it seems, unavoidable. [...] It is all very complicated; at every time, one actually feels the conflict between two eras, at times I think, only just today I can still see this India and these women, the mirth and sadness, the quietness of these women [...]. (Keller 1930b: 13)

Nevertheless, Keller did speak publicly about (New) Education, both to rural women as well as to an urban audience at the Imperial Cinema Hall in Bombay where a film about Odenwaldschule was screened, too. Keller later wrote that it 'was a moving experience to address the large and colourful audience' that, at the end of her speech, 'thronged to the platform, and there were invitations and presents offered me' (Prabuddhaprana 1994: 229).

When Keller initially refused to go to India as a teacher, in a way she rejected her role as a "superior westerner". Contrary to her intentions, she did not only lecture in India, she also, a sign typical of Orientalism, silenced Indians.



(Osterhammel 1997: 599) Her letters and reports about India contain Indophile stereotypes— Rows of homeless people sleeping in the streets looked like 'flower-beds' to her; she described air and light in India to be like honey (Keller 1930a: 141). These paradisiac images resonate with ideas from German Romanticism. Furthermore, she adored the melancholy and silence of Indian females whom Keller perceived as genuine. She wished this genuineness to be preserved and thus spoke out in favour for keeping them ignorant. The quasi-colonialist asymmetries that materialised in her reports are only superficially concealed by her Indophilia. Similarly, Keller's metaphysical notion of education is based on divine choice, that is, deeply deterministic and not in accordance with New Educationist emancipatory claims (Horn 2018: 233).

Ingeborg Badenhausen (1904-64), daughter of a civil servant in the Prussian customs office, entered Odenwaldschule in 1925 as a helper in the area of housekeeping. Alwine von Keller 'discovered' her pedagogical talent and became her mentor (Bose, Lüthi & Kopp 1970). Soon, Badenhausen was deployed in the kindergarten at Odenwaldschule. Later, from 1928 onwards, during the time of her teacher training at university, she taught students at secondary level too. Badenhausen developed an affectionate relationship not only to Keller, but also to the founder couple and the school as a whole. She became friends with Aurobindo Bose (1897-1977), a permanent Indian guest at Odenwaldschule, with whom she lived during her time in London. There, she did research for her PhD-thesis on Virginia Woolf's language and stylistics by the example of her novel *Orlando* (Badenhausen 1932e). Besides, Badenhausen had been travelling a lot. Altogether, she was a modern young woman with a cosmopolitan outlook (Horn 2018: 238-52).

Badenhausen's decision to work for two years in New Delhi in the pre-primary department was primarily a pragmatic one. She was in debt and needed to earn money. The chosen institution, *Modern School*, was well connected with the *Odenwaldschule*—its headmistress Kamala Bose had come there for a visit in 1927. *Modern School* was established in 1921 by Bose, a Bengali Christian, and Raghbir Singh⁷. Whereas an early student recalls it as an institution for high-class Indians who wanted their children to be prepared for Oxford or Cambridge, the founders emphasised the school's support for Indian Independence, especially for Gandhi and his struggle for Swaraj (Singh, Hameed & Modern School 1995; Singh 2003: 15f.). They were well connected with personalities like Gandhi and Tagore. At pre-primary level, *Modern School* was conducted on the systems of Montessori and Fröbel—at least that was what the program said. Generally, it was designed as a New Educationist school for both boys and girls with a certain focus on sports, games and handicrafts. Co-founder Singh stressed that 'education was to be imparted on the most liberal lines and all those



engaged in the task [...] were to be free from the prejudice of caste, colour, race and country.' (Singh 1995: 28)

Badenhausen was influenced by what she had heard about India at *Odenwaldschule*. Upon her arrival in Delhi, she wrote to her fiancé Andreas Hohlfeld⁸ that everything was pleasant, that Indians were "whole" and their bodies healthy and beautiful. In spite of all the poverty "on the surface", Badenhausen characterised Indians as possessing a 'gracefulness of the heart' (1931a). Furthermore, she was highly impressed by Gandhi's ideals. Approvingly she noted that members of *Modern School* cling to his principles, for example by wearing Khadi:

I am happy that I get to know these Indians, they are definitely the core of the nation [...]. Among them are the most intelligent and most precious people, many rich ones too. It is strange to see that those who could easily afford to buy fashionable European dresses walk in "home-spun", really modest. They are consistently doing that, and consistent in holding fast to their national traditions [...]. (1931b, underlined in original)

Badenhausen was deeply impressed by what she regarded as true national pride. Soon, however, she got disappointed. On the bazar, she once witnessed Singh ranting at beggars and shooing them away. 'I was aghast at this sight. [...] How strong are the class antagonisms here, and all that despite the fact that they are followers of Gandhi [...].' (1931c)

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This was the beginning of a sequence of disillusioning experiences for Badenhausen. Her initial Indophilia turned into its opposite. She started hating *Modern School*, mostly its teachers and the students' parents though she said that she loved working with her pupils. Badenhausen was responsible for thirty children between three and six years of age. She headed the so-called 'Montessori-department' and taught English with the help of two native speakers. Blaming her colleagues for mixing up individualised learning methods with anarchy, Badenhausen noted that some of the children in her class had 'gone wild' due to the lax education (Badenhausen 1931e)⁹. She felt obliged to teach the children discipline and introduced physical exercises in addition to the usual English lessons composed of nursery rhymes, songs and writing exercises. According to her letters, Badenhausen succeeded.

Indian mothers, wrote Badenhausen, were another problem. They 'marry and have children—yet they are not even educated! [...] afterwards they are surprised at how 'naughty' the children are [...]' (Badenhausen 1932a). Generally, her feelings regarding femininity were ambivalent. In her opinion, many of the women's movement's members were eccentric and would deny 'the best of their own hearts.' (1932c) For herself, Badenhausen claimed the ideal of an androgynous, intellectual and 'natural' femininity: plain, athletic, and sober—



strong, yet caring. A femininity, one must add, she could hardly have grown into without the achievements of early feminists. Her attitude towards Indian women was sceptical too. She met most of them in the elitist circles of Delhi, for example at a tea party at Mrs. Sultan Singh's, an earlier member of the AIWC (Badenhausen 1932b). On the one hand, she appreciated the femininity of some of them, mostly married women, yet found them intellectually unsatisfying. She disapproved of the other women in employment and with their own income, describing them as educated, yet unnaturally 'verbogen'¹⁰. (1931d)

As regards femininity, Badenhausen accepted only her individual criteria that oscillated between naturalisation, motherliness, emancipation, and the ideal of comradeship common in the German Youth Movement. So, while Badenhausen's femininity did not correspond with the traditional image of women in Germany, but was diverse in its own right, she could not tolerate the diverging concepts of womanhood in India. Badenhausen blamed Indian women for being underprivileged and even ridiculed them. Even the founder of Modern School, Raghbir Singh, whom Badenhausen detested by now, showed more sympathy when he argued that the '[I]ack of educational facilities for women [...] placed them at a disadvantage in their marriage in which they were not able to become real friends, mutual helpers, often making unhappy homes [...]. This incompatibility had a natural debilitating effect on the children.' (Singh 1995: 28) He acknowledged that women were not to be blamed for these shortcomings and thus adopted a marriage and domestic ideal that emerged in nationalist circles during the late nineteenth century (Walsh 2004: 51-3).

When Badenhausen encountered the Arya Samaj, that is, several Swamis and their *Gurukuls*, she believed to finally have found the true India, which was almost completely male. The Arya Samaj, a reformist Hindu association that promoted the 'pure' teachings of the Vedas ran—as part of their activities for Hindu and social reform—schools, *Gurukuls*, that were claimed to invoke the tradition of the ancient Vedic forest schools and the Brahmacharya ideal (Fischer-Tiné 2003). Badenhausen visited one of these gender-segregated schools, most of which were for boys only. There, she found what she had expected from India all along, an ascetic community that operated on the basis of pure Indian tradition in rural surroundings, a noble and nationalistic spirit. In March 1932, she was invited into a *Gurukul* to talk about the educational system in Germany. Badenhausen felt impressed by the school 'where the best of Indian Geist is realized' (1932c, emphasis added). Her description of the scene sounds like an oriental stereotype. After being welcomed by a Swami, a deep conversation develops. 'In the meantime, boys served both fruits and sweet cakes in large brass bowls as well as milk in silver cups. The room [was] spartan and simple [...], yet there was spirit and fine humanity [...].' (ibid.) When Badenhausen gave her speech, it fascinated the whole audience. Later on, 'a lot of people came to



me and I felt that what I had said was really quite a novelty for them' (ibid.). Here, Badenhausen could both admire the 'true and authentic India' and at the same time be superior to those noble Gurukulis by lecturing and inspiring them.

Ellen Teichmüller-Sharma (1898-1978) experienced similar feelings after she had left Germany with her Indian husband, Venkatesh Narayan Sharma, and her two daughters for South India. She graduated at Odenwaldschule in 1919, returned with her teacher's exam four years later, and re-entered the school as a teacher for primary education. Sharma had been employed to teach Sanskrit at Odenwaldschule in 1930, Teichmüller married him in 1932. Following Keller's advice, Teichmüller-Sharma and her family left Germany in 1936. Initially, the theosophist G. V. Subha Rao (1890-1975), principle of Rishi Valley School and earlier mentor of V. N. Sharma, had invited them to teach there. Rishi Valley School was preceded by the theosophical Guindy School, an educational institution based on what were said to be Krishnamurti's ideas.

Keller had paid it a visit in 1929. Subha Rao had introduced Montessori's methods and materials to the school as early as 1926 (Herzberger & Herzberger 2016). The Indo-German couple, however, was not able to settle in, Teichmüller-Sharma reported of complicated circumstances (1937a). Finally, they decided to go their own way, driven by the vision of another Odenwaldschule in India, and founded the Children's Garden School. Teichmüller-Sharma was the one who took care for the supply with pedagogical material, most of which was either sent to them by Edith Geheeb from Switzerland or fabricated by herself, based for example on books such as *Das Herstellen von Holzspielzeug mit einfachen Mitteln* (1929) by Bauhaus designer Fritz Ehlitzky (Teichmüller-Sharma 1937b, 1937f). Children seemed to have loved this school because of its attractive toys (Teichmüller-Sharma 1937d).

Shortly after her arrival, in a sort of outrage, Teichmüller-Sharma wrote to her mother: 'What kind of fairy tales did you tell me about India!' (cit. in Keller 1937) She described India as totally lacking originality and that it was merely a childish imitation of Europe (1937e). In contrast to what her mother must have told her, the 'real India' appeared to Teichmüller-Sharma as corrupted by modernity as anywhere else. In her disappointment, she not only denied India its "Indian-ness" but drew on the stereotype of India as being child-like, a child Teichmüller-Sharma did not appreciate. According to her judgement, it was stupid and backward. This attitude is somewhat mirrored in her frustration about the twelve Indian children that attended the kindergarten she and Sharma had founded by then. She characterised them as 'stubborn, naughty, and clumsy' (1937f). For instance, Teichmüller-Sharma reported the incident of a five-year old girl being sent to the Children's Garden School by her ambitious parents to take up regular school education. Yet, the child would not even be able to handle



a pencil. To begin with, Teichmüller-Sharma made her play freely with coloured pencils. The following day, the girl produced dots. On the third day, she followed the contours of a circle drawn by her teacher. On the fourth day, however, the child lost her interest in pencils altogether (ibid.).

Teichmüller-Sharma's resentments, however, were only transitory. She observed that many parents wanted their children to be literate by the age of five or even four. Even orthodox Hindu families would ambitiously send their offspring to Christian schools for making them fluent in English. Teichmüller-Sharma empathetically recognised the parents' wish to make their children fit for their future. Her pragmatism prevailed. Instead of denying the parents' demands, she checked for suitable English textbooks and decided to introduce one she knew from Rishi Valley (1937c). The couple succeeded in establishing the Children's Garden School that exists to this day. Except for one or two trips to Europe, for example in 1960, Ellen Sharma-Teichmüller remained in India for the rest of her life.

Whereas Teichmüller-Sharma pragmatically adapted to the circumstances, Badenhausen was, as she wrote several times, afraid to be 'humiliated by India' (1931f). It is a typical phenomenon for female German teachers abroad at that time to develop the need for national self-assurance that often resulted in strengthening patriotism (Gippert & Kleinau 2014: 12). In comparison, everything German seemed to be worthy of export into a foreign culture that appeared inferior to these teachers (ibid.). Badenhausen, too, was stuck in comparing Germany with India as *the Other*. Keller, however, did not feel the need to gain advantage over India but stuck with her Indophilia: 'Everywhere, I found my image of India affirmed. Neither the dark side of the poor and overpopulated country nor that I realized my being European did harm to my deeply felt emotions.' (Keller [ca. 1950]: 159f.)

4 Margarete Spiegel: 'How Gandhi taught me'

Margarete Spiegel (1897-1968) was a teacher at a girls' *Gymnasium* in Berlin between 1929 and 1933. (Personalbericht 1929, 1934) She sympathised with the German Peace Movement¹¹ and *New Educationist* ideas, especially the concept of the *Landerziehungsheim* (Voigt 1999: 150f.). Her parents were Jewish merchants and were able to offer the necessary support for her to complete her philological studies up to a PhD, achieved at Bonn University in 1921.¹² Already in her childhood years, Spiegel reports, she had felt drawn towards Indian religion (Spiegel 1968: 3). Later, she became a devoted follower of M. K. Gandhi. By the end of the 1920s, when she already taught languages at the Richard Wagner Oberlyzeum in Berlin-Friedrichshagen, she read his writings and recognised in him the 'prophet of the teachings of ahimsa' (ibid.). Once, she had even tried to



impart his ideas to her students. However, they ridiculed her attempts and made rude jokes about the *Holy Cow*.

In 1932, Spiegel travelled to India, visited Varanasi, stayed for a while in Sabarmati Ashram, and met Gandhi who was arrested in Pune at that time. Later they began their correspondence. Upon her return to Germany, the Nazis had already taken over the government. Spiegel was about to lose her job (Personalbericht 1934). She must have sensed the danger and immediately returned to India where she became a member of Gandhi's Ashram, first in Sabarmati, later in Wardha, and was given the name Amla. Besides several other responsibilities, she was involved in teaching children. However, Spiegel could not live up to Gandhi's expectations and was often criticised by him. After barely two years, she gave up her ambitions of becoming a proper *Satyagrahi*. Spiegel left for *Shantiniketan* where, among others, she taught Indira Nehru, who would later become the Prime Minister of India. As Tagore was financially not in the position to offer her a permanent post, Spiegel left in mid-1935 after approximately one year (Tagore n.d.). She moved to Bombay and later to Baroda where she became the headmistress of a girls' school. She died in 1968 in Bombay.

In 1933, Spiegel published *Mahatma Gandhi und die indische Frau* in a leading journal for female German teachers where she discussed the situation of Indian women and reported on issues like the purdah system, child marriage and insufficient education for girls—'Indian women suffer from an inferiority complex. Female students [...] were shy to the extent that they didn't dare to answer to my questions. [...] not even elementary education is free of charge.' (Spiegel 1933d: 241f.) Even though Spiegel addressed the problem of poverty as a reason for the discrimination of women, she mainly followed Gandhi's normative point of view regarding women as a general representation of purity. Their disgrace was caused by men unable to control their sexuality. Gandhi's ideal of womanhood was not only Sita, a figure from Hindu mythology, but also the mother who, with her example, handed down religiousness and piety to her children. Accordingly, women's task in society was "service" since the fate of the Indian nation depended on women. Spiegel approved of this and remarked that it was Gandhi who had 'discovered the spiritual and mental powers of the woman' (ibid.). She admired him for feeling understood by him: 'There is not one man who understands women better than the ascetic Mahatma Gandhi. Women are sisters to him. As he is free from all passion he is able to empathize with the female soul [...].' (Spiegel 1933: 242) At Sabarmati, Spiegel herself did not solidarize with other women, not even with his western associates (Kumar 2006: 189-212).



Spiegel was always ready to submit to Gandhi's will. Prior to leaving Germany due to the restrictions imposed by the Nazis, Spiegel had applied for several jobs in India. When she told Gandhi, he replied: 'You do not want a job in India, but you want to give your free service, the whole of yourself, to India.' (Spiegel 1948) Even though Gandhi was convinced that Spiegel was not ready for life in his Ashram, he did not accept her taking up a paid job. It was his opinion that if women need to work at all they should turn to spinning or weaving (Gandhi 1924: 99). Spiegel followed his instruction despite both of them knowing she was not a gifted spinner, to say the least. She became an unhappy misfit in Gandhi's Ashram.

Overall, Spiegel's relation to Gandhi can be regarded as an educational one, even though hardly any explicit pedagogical exchange is documented. The complexity of this relationship lies partly in their different notions of education. Spiegel, a highly educated Jewish women, having obtained a PhD in linguistic sciences, was not trained in practising handicraft. Gandhi, however, continuously stressed the importance of handicrafts such as spinning in the education of children in order to achieve Swaraj. Initially, Gandhi was interested in how she conducted lessons and asked her to report about her students in Berlin. He believed hints from her might be useful for the education of the children in his Ashram (Gandhi 1999a). As an answer, Spiegel sent him a few of her pupils' papers that made, as Gandhi wrote, an 'interesting reading' (Gandhi 1999b). At the same time, he scolded her for 'stealing time from your pupils' by translating their papers for him. Later, when Spiegel took care for the Ashram children, he angrily told her that she must not impose her will on them: 'You can only make them do things that they do willingly.' (Gandhi 1934) Interestingly enough, this sentence mirrors much of the inner paradoxes of "New Educationist" concepts—the idea of allowing the children more freedom while at the same time controlling them in their choices. Spiegel, being an intellectual and obviously incapable of handicraft, could have never met Gandhi's expectation as he was deliberately in favour of practical education and rejected 'book learning' (Holzwarth 2015: 22).

It was Spiegel's misfortune that she so desperately wished to become a worthy disciple of Gandhi, who did not just deny Spiegel her pedagogical abilities. Spiegel signed her letters to him with 'your devoted daughter'; after an incident she wrote: 'Bapu, I promise you to do my work so well [...] that you cannot but forget my shocking behaviour', sounding indeed like a rueful daughter (1933c). She thought of herself as someone who needed to learn. All this resonates in the title of her reminiscence of the Mahatma: *How Gandhi taught through letters* (Spiegel 1948). Indeed, Gandhi intended her to do what he called 'Harijan work'¹³ and did lecture her continuously. Reading his letters, one cannot but get the impression that he aimed at forming her according to his own ideas. Thus, the correspondence between Spiegel and Gandhi is mostly that of a strict



and often unrelenting master and his unhappily untalented disciple. His letters contain orders such as '[...] become steady. [...] Do become a wise woman of 35 instead of being a child of 5 years' (Gandhi 1999e). Gandhi kept an eye on her, and wrote to Narandas Gandhi, his nephew and manager at Sabaramati that 'She is very sincere, but has strong likes and dislikes. We should, however, support her as long as she observes the rules. If she shapes well, she will do very well indeed.' (1999c) Only a few weeks later, he must have realised that Spiegel might not develop the way he wished her to. In a letter to Mirabehn he noted that Spiegel was 'as mad as a mad-hatter' and that 'it remains to be seen how she shapes.' (1999d)

One must keep in mind that Spiegel, a Jew, was a refugee and dependent on Gandhi vouching for her. She had been experiencing the anti-Semitic hatred of the National Socialists in Germany (Spiegel 1933a). Leaving Berlin for India meant losing the life she had been living up to then and going into an uncertain future. Furthermore, she felt guilty for having left her mother behind. (Spiegel 1933b) Spiegel must have been in a state of turmoil and thus emotionally quite unstable.

It may be stated in summation that with regards to the dimension of the global supremacy of the Occident, Spiegel and Gandhi exchanged roles, not only because her being a Jewish refugee weakened her occidental status. Instead, male supremacy was reinforced in their relationship. Firstly, when Gandhi forbade her to take up a job and hence become self-sustaining, he forced his idea of womanhood on her. Secondly, when Spiegel conceded to his authority and began to see herself as his daughter, therein accepting the female role assigned to her. The latter of these two aspects was induced by an Indophilia that took Spiegel as far as addressing Gandhi as God (Spiegel 1933c). Here too, we can see the Indophile idea of "India" being paramount to the corrupted civilisation and thus having educating forces that correspond to New Educational ideals. Spiegel wanted to develop into someone who could meet her own high expectations, to become her own higher self. Even though she failed in achieving a "Gandhian standard", Spiegel did not stop to hold Gandhi in veneration for the rest of her life (Spiegel 1968).

5 Kitty Shiva Rao and Elise Braun-Barnett: two Jewish Montessori teachers and theosophists amidst the Indian elite

Kitty Shiva Rao, née Verständig, and Elise Braun-Barnett, née Herbatschek, taught at the Vienna House of Children, a Montessori school in a working-class district, and took part in local meetings of the Theosophical Society (Franz 2016; Franz & Halbrainer 2014). Both grew up in Jewish families belonging to the upper middle-class (ibid.). In 1925, Verständig (1903-after 1975) attended the



conference on the 50th anniversary of the Theosophical Society in Adyar.¹⁴ She stayed in India and started heading a Montessori school in Varanasi. In 1929, she married Benegal Shiva Rao, journalist, Congress Politician, and earlier private tutor of Jiddu Krishnamurti, who had been educated by theosophists to become the new "Lord Maitreya". Thus, Kitty Shiva Rao became a member of the influential South Indian family of the Shiva Raos and a close friend of the famous Krishnamurti. Additionally, she became an active member of the AIWC.

Shiva Rao was a convinced New Educationist and trained Montessori teacher. She strongly believed in the idea that children should be enabled to unfold themselves and their inherent potential, that their needs must be realised and satisfied (Shiva Rao 2004: 144f.). Therefore, she strongly criticised authoritarian forms of education that could be found in India despite 'the cult of Sri Krishna, the worship of God in the child and the child in God' (ibid.: 147). According to Shiva Rao, the educational relationship almost needed to be reversed (ibid.). After several years in India, in 1931, she travelled to Germany and visited schools such as the Geheeb's Odenwaldschule, probably to catch up on developments in New Education, as a number of Indian New Educationists did.

Shiva Rao was closely associated with both the Indian women's Movement and the Indian New Education. She was not only convinced that Montessori's approach would fit Indian needs, but also that children at the level of kindergarten should be taught and educated by women whose demands needed to be kept in mind, mostly concerning their training and the safeguarding of their economic position. Shiva Rao requested the opening of kindergartens amongst all classes of people and spoke up for this idea in several educational boards of the Indian government after 1947, e.g. by pioneering the Indian Council of Child Welfare (Shiva Rao 2004: 141). Earlier, during the 1940s, she had acted as member-in-charge for the Social and Legislation Section at the AIWC (All India Women's Conference 1941/42 & 1945/46). Shiva Rao agreed with the Conference's agitation 'for a higher legal status for women in the structure of society' and their plea 'that the position of women in any state or society was an indication of the degree of its civilisation.' (Shiva Rao 1945: 3)

In 1927, Kitty Shiva Rao asked her friend and colleague Elise Herbatschek (1904-94) to help establish a Montessori school in Allahabad. Herbatschek agreed and worked there for two years, not only because of her pedagogic ambition but also her 'desire to learn more of the real values and meaning of human life, with the expectation of finding them in India by studying Oriental philosophy and associating with persons whom I considered more advanced spiritually.' (Braun-Barnett 1966: vii) Herbatschek built up the Montessori school in Allahabad from scratch. When it opened, children between three and eight years of age attended lessons and later older students were admitted, too. They



worked with the Montessori apparatus and little shovels and brooms—possibly referring to Gandhi’s wish to remove the stigma of untouchability. This influence might have come from one of her assistants at the Allahabad Montessori School, Krishna Nehru, a sister of the later Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, who reports to have been trained as a Montessori teacher during her stay in Europe (Hutheesing 1945: 59). Her then 10-year-old niece Indira Nehru was, besides several children from upper-class advocate families in Allahabad, one of Elise Herbatschek’s students. In 1929, Herbatschek successfully supported the foundation of another Montessori school in Bombay, the New Era School (Braun-Barnett [1991]: 6)¹⁵.

After Hitler’s invasion into Austria in 1938, Elise—then married to Rudolf Braun with whom she had a daughter—managed with the help of Kitty Shiva Rao to migrate with her family to India. Her earlier assistant, Krishna, now married to Gunottam Hutheesing, welcomed her, and initially, the Braun family stayed at their house in Bombay. Krishna Hutheesing arranged for Braun to give a radio speech on the Montessori methods so that she was able to earn money (Braun-Barnett [1991]: 3). Soon, Braun was offered the job of a teacher at the famous Rajghat School in Varanasi, an institution of the Theosophical Society, where she worked with children between three and seven years of age. She conducted classes of about twenty-five pupils. At the same time, Braun trained her Indian co-teachers who were to help her communicating with the children in Hindustani (Braun-Barnett 1966: 117f.). In her autobiographical writings, Braun-Barnett praises Rajghat School as following 'the highest ideals of education.' (Braun-Barnett [1991]: 9) Not only did the teachers have frequent meetings, but the students also settled their difficulties among and by themselves. Some of them boarders, the children 'seemed to be completely contended, independent and well adjusted to the discipline necessary for living in a community.' (Braun-Barnett 1966: 117f.) By 1947, she left India and later became Professor at the Music Department at the City College in New York.

To conclude, Shiva Rao and Braun-Barnett socialised with Indian elite women, that is, members of the Nehru family or the AIWC, and entertained rather egalitarian relationships with them, the latter trained her Indian female assistants in the Montessori method. Despite following theosophy with its Indophile character, neither of them overtly refreshed overidealized imaginations of India, rather both adopted to 'real India's' conditions. Encountering a nationalist Indian elite, often educated in Europe, they were witness to the process of Indian nation-building, which was itself oscillating between notions of a glorious Indian past and modern visions of an Indian future.



6 Conclusions

In this article, I have looked at encounters of German-speaking and Indian New Educationists during the 1920s until 1940s, interrogating sources about constructions of difference and power relations. Against the background of German Indophilia, especially amongst the New Education movement, I introduced six Germanophone pedagogues, most of whom were related to women's activism, and their reports or personal writings about their stay in India.

As concerns the German and Austrian New Educationists, almost all of them were influenced by a (religiously) Indophile discourse that combines Romanticist imaginations of childhood and femininity. According to this discourse, India represented the "Golden Age" or the childhood of humanity. As opposed to western modernity, it was considered pure, natural, and wholesome. German romanticists had created these highly desirable imaginations of India in a process that may be described as an *inverted Othering*, the production of a desirable image of India as the "Other" that served to criticise oneself without questioning one's own (designated) superiority. During the German and Austrian pedagogues' times in India, however, their Indophile notions often conflicted with realities. For instance, they often spoke critically of Indian women, stressed their lack of education, their inferior legal status, their weaknesses.

Badenhausen despised Indian women for being subordinate while favouring the Arya Samajist ideal of an ascetic masculinity. Spiegel, totally submitted to Gandhi, desired to grow into what she thought was his ideal of a woman-*Satyagrahi*. After disengaging, she addressed herself to girls' schooling in Baroda from 1948 onwards. Shiva Rao associated with members of the Indian women's movement and struggled with them for educational, social, and legal improvements. By marrying B. N. Shiva Rao she became as good as an Indian herself. Keller idealised the position of women in Indian society. To her, they represented original, even godly womanhood and needed to be protected from developments such as modern education.

None of these attitudes fully fits 'Feminist Orientalism' (Dietze 2017: 89f.). Spiegel criticised coarse patriarchal practices, yet supported Gandhi's more subtle forms of reinforcing them. Keller and Badenhausen, though silencing Indian women, never criticised patriarchy at all. Shiva Rao supported the Indian feminists' struggles altogether. While Dietze's concept corresponds to a "typical" "Othering" as described by Spivak (1985), most of the cases introduced here represent an *inverted* form of *Othering*. This attitude corresponds with German New Educational concepts that were designed to enable children—representing the desired *Other*—to unfold their true, that is, pure and good nature. The motto of Odenwaldschule, 'Become who you are' (Pindar), reflects this idea. Similarly,



inverted Othering gave rise to a notion of womanhood that emphasised "female-only" qualities such as (spiritual) motherhood and the resulting ability of highly professional care-work.

There are interesting overlaps with imaginations of India as passed on according to German romanticist thought and the constructions of Indian history amongst associations of Hindu-reform, such as the Arya Samaj, or Indian nationalists like Tagore and Gandhi. Indophilia and Hindu Indian nationalist revivalism both shared a number of ideas about the golden Vedic past and cultural conservatism, particularly in relation to gender. Theosophy, being a 'global player', reinforced idealised notions of Indian religious traditions and combined it with modern thought. All these ideas were significant for Indian and German New Education, which theoretically made them a perfect match. Looking at processes of exchange, transfer, and/or entanglements, the rebounding effects of Indophilia on both sides have become visible. However, 'Indian reality' was a challenge for the German and Austrian New Educationists in most cases. Except for Braun-Barnett and Shiva Rao, all experienced India as nothing less than disconcerting. Badenhausen came to detest the modern India and New Delhi that surrounded Modern School. Spiegel was humiliated by Gandhi, whom she believed to be a blueprint of 'the ideal Indian'. Keller melancholically noted that she could only see the India she thought of and that it would soon be different, that is, like the West (Keller 1930b: 12). Even Teichmüller-Sharma despised being in India in the beginning; and Braun-Barnett who initially hoped for spiritual growth in India later 'realized that I was not meant to stay [...] away from Western culture' (Braun-Barnett [1991]: 2). The *inverted Othering* induced by their Indophilia in some cases turned into a "regular" *Othering*. However, it never truly challenged power asymmetries.

What can be concluded for Indian New Education? Firstly, the reports of the New Educationists offer an insight into a diverse educational sphere. However, most of the Indian New Educationists mentioned here belonged to elitist circles of both politics as well as social or religious reform movements in support for Indian independence. Indian New Education was closely linked to the national education movement, and, hence, the struggle for Indian independence as a project of nation building. Especially Gandhi, the Tagores, and the Nehru family, all Congress leadership, were involved in founding or heading progressive schools and sent their offspring to such institutes. Important local figures, like Raghubir Singh in Delhi or the Sarabhai family in Gujarat, also played a significant role, both as educators as well as supporters of Gandhi. It can be assumed that New Education in India was, for the most part, an elitist project. Accordingly, Shiva Rao in 1946 critically remarked that "except in big towns [...] a few Montessori schools and kindergartens have come into existence for the well-to-do and a few schools have been opened by owners of factories for the children of



their workers.' (Shiva Rao 2004: 145) Tschurenev has also recently pointed out 'the elitist basis of many New Education projects in India' (Tschurenev 2017: 442).

Indian New Education was influenced by the women's movement. Almost all introduced Germanophone pedagogues reported of co-educational lessons in Indian New Schools. Moreover, Shiva Rao, a convinced Montessori pedagogue and feminist, stressed the need of education for pre-school children and claimed this educational sphere for women: 'The first step towards child education will have to be the training of teachers—preferably women teachers and subsequently the opening of children's schools amongst all classes of people. I would like to stress here that in the interests of the child, the economic position of the kindergarten or school teacher must be safeguarded' (Shiva Rao 2004: 145). In line with this, the colleagues of those Germans and Austrians who worked in Indian New Schools were Indian female pedagogues or assistants. Considering the earlier influences of Fröbel's education model in India (cf. Allen 2018), the elementary sections of New Schools might have been a major zone for an emerging women's professionalism.

Even though Indophilia might have been experienced as an empowering influence by Indians, the dichotomy was still reinforced. Tagore, for instance, invoked essentialist images of Indians as genuinely spiritual, peaceful and living in perfect harmony with nature (Tagore [1923]). '[M]odern education', as a contrast, might destroy 'the spiritual apprehension of truth' (Tagore 1922: 124). Keller and some of her colleagues would have agreed. Thus, Indophile visions gave rise to imaginations that made India affirmatively appear as child-like and positively feminine and hence, in a position to teach and re-educate the corrupt western civilisation. The result was, however, not fully in favour of India as, on a global scale, childhood and femininity remained underprivileged.

Endnotes

1 Kesper-Biermann developed the concept "Transnationaler Bildungsraum", cf. S. Kesper-Biermann. 2013. Kommunikation, Austausch, Transfer. Bildungsräume im 19. Jahrhundert. In: E. Möller & J. Wischmeyer (eds.), *Transnationale Bildungsräume. Wissenstransfers im Schnittfeld von Kultur, Politik und Religion*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, pp. 21-41.

2 This passage is originally in German. This and all following German quotes were translated into English by the author.

3 Its leader, Annie Besant, had a restricted, romanticised vision of the ideal Hindu woman, though. Indian feminists were sometimes highly critical of her. More details on Besant's feminism and education: C. L. Singh. 2018. Making "ideal" Indian women: Annie Besant's engagement with the issue of female education in early twentieth-century India. *Pedagogica Historica* 2018, pp. 1-20.

4 For a complex perspective: M. E. Tusan. 2003. Writing stri dharma: International feminism, nationalist politics, and women's press advocacy in late colonial India. *Women's History Review*, 12 (4), pp. 623-49.



5 More about Keller c.f. Baader (2004, 2005); Schwitalski, Ellen. 2004. *"Werde, die du bist". Pionierinnen der Reformpädagogik: Die Odenwaldschule im Kaiserreich und in der Weimarer Republik*. Bielefeld: Transcript; Horn, Elija. 2015. German female New Educationists in India during the 1920's and 30's. In Michael Mann, ed. *Shantiniketan-Hellerau. New Education in the 'Pedagogic Provinces' of India and Germany*. Heidelberg: Draupadi, pp. 53-79.

6 Sister Nivedita, born as Margret Noble (1867-1911), was a follower of Vivekananda. She founded a girl's school at Bagbazar in 1898.

7 Lala Raghubir Singh, son of the influential banker Rai Bahadur Sultan Singh, acquainted with elite members of Indian Congress and high-ranking representatives of the colonial administration like the Viceroy. His stepmother Sushila Devi Sultan Singh was a famous women's leader and 'pioneer of women's education' leading a school "for the purdah girls of the inner city [...] in Daryaganj." (Singh, Hameed & Modern School 1995: xiii).

8 Andreas Hohlfeld (1906-45) was a pedagogue and member of the NSDAP. During the mid-1930s, he worked as assistant of Hermann Kriek and later headed the Hochschule für Lehrerbildung in Karlsruhe.

9 German original: '[...] sie sind gänzlich verlottert [...].'

10 I.e. bent or twisted. Considering the diction, Badenhausen possibly wanted to insinuate that these women were lesbians.

11 Spiegel published a few notes in the German pacifist journal *Die Friedenswarte*. She covered the 1929 conference of *Bund der Kriegsdienstgegner* and notified of the annual conference of the *New Education Fellowship* in Helsingør (Spiegel, Wehberg & Steinitz 1929: 184ff.). One of her co-authors was Martha Steinitz whose article on conscientious objection was published in Franz Kobler's *Gewalt und Gewaltlosigkeit* (1928) that also contained texts from M. K. Gandhi.

102 12 Spiegel did her teacher's exam on *Die pädagogischen Leitgedanken der Landerziehungsheime* (1922), her PhD thesis is titled *Völkernamen als Epitheta im Gallo-Romanischen* (1921).

13 The term *Harijan* was rejected by the Dalit movement, cf. e.g. DN, 1991, Gandhi, Ambedkar and Separate Electorates Issue, in: *Economic and Political Weekly* (May 25), pp. 1328-30.

14 There were rumors something extraordinary regarding the messiah-ship of Krishnamurti would happen there, c.f. Lutyens, Mary. 1975. *Krishnamurti: the years of awakening* New York: Murray, p. 223.

15 The school was located close to Malabar Hills and still in existence when she wrote this report.

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